

Sheets of Sobriety - April 2015

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~Spreading the message one paper at a time~

The opinions and viewpoints expressed in these Sheets of Sobriety are not necessarily those of AA as a whole, or Indianapolis Intergroup. They are the expression of the individuals submitting content to our editor for publication to our fellowship. Please send any comments, feedback or contributions to be published to briaocon@gmail.com. We welcome your thoughts and thank you for your service!



FREEDOM FROM FEAR

When, with God's help, we calmly accepted our lot, then we found we could live at peace with ourselves and show others who still suffered the same fears that they could get over them, too. We found that freedom from fear was more important than freedom from want.

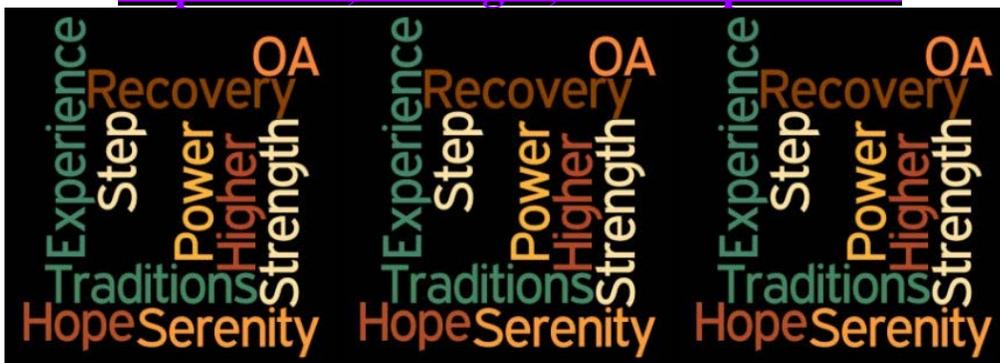
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, p. 122

Material values ruled my life for many years during my active alcoholism. I believed that all of my possessions would make me happy, yet I still felt bankrupt after I obtained them. When I first came into A.A., I found out about a new way of living. As a result of learning to trust others, I began to believe in a power greater than myself. Having faith freed me from the bondage of self. As material gains were replaced by the gifts of the spirit, my life became manageable. I then chose to share my experiences with other alcoholics.



“I have found that the process of discovering who I really am begins with knowing who I really don't want to be.” Pg. 1

Experience, Strength, and Hope - K.T.



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.

I've heard the above many times, and until recently hadn't really thought about what it means: "Experience, strength, and hope"? What I finally realized is so simple. After it dawned on me, I wondered why it had taken me so long. The simple answer is this: The past is my experience, the present is my strength, and the future is my hope. To me these are three important ideas.

The past is my experience. This includes the good, the bad, and the ugly. Much of my experience as a drinking alcoholic was bad, and the experiences which led me to "hit bottom" were ugly. These are important to remember, but perhaps not to dwell on. Today I find it more meaningful to remember, with gratitude, the many good experiences I've had in sobriety with Alcoholics Anonymous. Still, as the promises tell us, "We will not regret the past, nor wish to shut the door on it." Today, I try not to regret any of my past experiences because they have brought me to where I am. Also, occasionally something from my past might be meaningful or helpful to someone else.

The present is my strength. Say that to yourself a few times. Don't you feel stronger already? This means to me, that I can do things today which will give me strength. I even made a list: watch a sunrise, say a prayer, meditate, read something meaningful, call a friend, plant a flower, go to a meeting, be grateful. Repeat as needed, early and often. Alternatively, on a bad day, I can remember that anything that doesn't kill me, only makes me stronger. I find that thought to be a comfort.

The future is my hope. That is to say, that instead of being worried or fearful about what might happen, I can have an attitude of hope when thinking about the future. If I focus on fear or worry about the future, that

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depletes my strength today, whereas, if I have hope for the future, I can do what needs to be done today. My first sponsor (the late Molly M) had a saying about fear as follows: "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." She also had a saying about worrying: "Worrying is like rocking in a rocking chair. It might give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere." I wish she had a saying about hope, because that would fit right in, but since I don't know of one, I will just say that the future is my hope.

Step of the Month:



Working Step 4 - Bill L.

Step 4 - Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves

In the first full paragraph of page 64, they write:

"Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he CANNOT fool himself about values."

So, we are going to conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory on our lives. We are going to discover what had blocked us off from the Sunlight of the Spirit. In the next paragraph, the authors tell us exactly what we have to do to conduct a Fourth Step inventory:

"We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self (not alcohol but self), manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations."

If you remember, this is a reference back to what was discussed in Step Three that self-will (or "my life run on my will") is the root of our troubles. We are now going to inventory or, "take stock" if you will, of three

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manifestations of self-will: our resentments, our fears, and our sex conduct and harms toward others. The Fourth Step commentary in the 12 & 12 goes into much greater detail about this, but we humans have three basic instincts of life which create self: the social instinct, the security instinct, and the sex instinct. These are needed in order for the human race to survive. All humans have them and they are God-given so they are good, but when we use them selfishly or incorrectly, they cause problems for others and ourselves. When the social instinct is used incorrectly, it brings about resentments. When the security instinct is used incorrectly, it brings about fears. And when the sex instinct is used incorrectly, it brings about harms to others. Left to our own resources, we will invariably overdo in these areas. In our selfish attempt to fulfill these desires, we are in constant conflict with others. That is why, coincidentally, the Big Book's Fourth Step process focuses directly on resentments, fears, and harms; so it gets down to our misdirected instincts and the root of our problems. Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct. All self-centered people have difficulties in these three areas whether they are alcoholics or not. Let us reassure you, the Fourth Step is not difficult nor should it be a tedious process. Within seven pages of text, the "Big Book" authors give us precise instructions on how to make a good beginning on facing and getting rid of the obstacles in our path to the Power greater than ourselves.

THE RESENTMENT INVENTORY

The first manifestation of "self" we're going to look at is our resentments. Since Bill Wilson liked using different words that mean the same thing, the book uses a few different expressions when describing who and what to write down. People, institutions or principles with whom we have resentment, with whom we were angry, with whom we were hurt or threatened or interfered with, with whom we felt had wronged us, with whom we stayed sore at, with whom we felt "burned up" toward, and with whom we held a grudge. Also included in this list should be people, institutions or principles with whom we were annoyed with, agitated by, or let down by; and also include your regrets because regret is resentment toward yourself. Needless to say, this is usually a long list.

The word resentment comes from the Latin word "sentire" which means "to feel", and when you put "re" in front of any word, it means "again", so the word resent means "to feel again". After we experience what we perceive as being wronged by someone, the first response usually is anger or frustration. But then after a while, after we have reviewed in our mind

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what happened, and have felt the anger or anxiety again and again, we move to the next stage, which is resentment. Over a short period of time, as I playback the suspected harm in my head, I become less and less involved in what happened and the other person becomes more and more to blame. Sometimes we are able to let the incident go without moving past anger, but if you are a self-centered alcoholic, that is usually a difficult thing to do since we tend to keep score of these things so we can at some point get back at them. I'm sure no one here can relate. In the third paragraph on page 64, the authors write:

"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. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically."

Please notice the equation in that last sentence, "When the SPIRITUAL malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." It describes the Program and the ONLY three relationships we all have - our relationship with God, our relationship with ourselves, and our relationship with others (which includes the physical world around us). In the first three Steps, we get headed in the right direction with our relationship with God. In Steps Four through Seven, we get headed in the right direction with our relationship with ourselves. And in Steps Eight and Nine, we get headed in the right direction with our relationship with others. Then in Step 10, we deepen and broaden our relationship with ourselves. In Step 11, we deepen and broaden our relationship with God. And in Step 12, we deepen and broaden our relationship with others. So the Steps are not some random, fluke process. They are a specific, focused and deeply effective set of tools that bring about a transformation or personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism.



"I have found that the process of discovering who I really am begins with knowing who I really don't want to be." Pg. 5

Tradition of the Month:



On Tradition Four

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

“With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.”

This Tradition, Number 4, is a specific application of general principles already outlined in Traditions 1 and 2.

Tradition 1 states, *“Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.”*

Tradition 2 states, *“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.”*

With these concepts in mind, let us look more closely at Tradition 4. The first sentence of Tradition 4 guarantees each A.A. group local autonomy. With respect to its own affairs, the group may make any decisions, adopt any attitudes that it likes. No over-all or intergroup authority should challenge this primary privilege. We feel this ought to be so, even though the group might sometimes act with complete indifference to our tradition. For example, an A.A. group could, if it wished, hire a paid preacher and support him out of the proceeds of a group night club. Though such an absurd procedure would be miles outside our tradition, the group's "right to be wrong" would be held inviolate. We are sure that each group

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can be granted, and safely granted, these most extreme privileges. We know that our familiar process of trial and error would summarily eliminate both the preacher and the night club. Those severe growing pains which invariably follow any radical departure from A.A. tradition can be absolutely relied upon to bring an erring group back into line. An A.A. group need not be coerced by any human government over and above its own members. Their own experience, plus A.A. opinion in surrounding groups, plus God's prompting in their group conscience would be sufficient. Much travail has already taught us this. Hence we may confidently say to each group, "You should be responsible to no other authority than your own conscience."

Yet please note one important qualification. It will be seen that such extreme liberty of thought and action applies only *to the group's own affairs*. Rightly enough, this Tradition goes on to say, "*But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, these groups ought to be consulted.*" Obviously, if any individual, group or regional committee could take an action which might seriously affect the welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, or seriously disturb surrounding groups, that would not be liberty at all. It would be sheer license; it would be anarchy, not democracy.

Therefore, we A.A.s have universally adopted the principle of consultation. This means that if a single A.A. group wishes to take any action which might affect surrounding groups, it consults them. Or, if there be one, it confers with the intergroup committee for the area. Likewise, if a group or regional committee wishes to take any action that might affect A.A. as a whole, it consults the trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation, who are, in effect, our over-all General Service Committee. For instance, no group or intergroup could feel free to initiate, without consultation, any publicity that might affect A.A. as a whole. Nor could it assume to represent the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous by printing and distributing anything purporting to be A.A. standard literature. This same principle would naturally apply to all similar situations. Though there is no formal compulsion to do so, all undertakings of this general character are customarily checked with our A.A. General Headquarters. This idea is clearly summarized in the last sentence of Tradition 4, which observes, "*On such issues our common welfare is paramount.*"

Editorial by Bill W. - Grapevine, March, 1948



"I have found that the process of discovering who I really am begins with knowing who I really don't want to be." Pg. 7



Kyle C. - 4 Years Dick M. - 34 Years Marge B. - 35 Years
Bonnie L. - 20 Years Trevor J. - 7 Years Sharon B. - 29
Years



~After spending the evening at the bar, a woman was in no shape to drive, so she left her car in front of the bar and headed home. Stumbling along the street, she was stopped by a police officer. “What are you doing out here at 3am?” asked the officer.

“Going to a lecture,” slurred the woman.

“And who is giving a lecture at this hour?” the cop asked.

“My husband,” said the woman.

~On New Year’s Eve, Judy stood up at the local pub and said that it was time to get ready. “At the stroke of midnight,” she said, “I want everybody to be standing next to the one person who has made your life worth living.”
The bartender was nearly crushed to death.

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